



United States Department of Agriculture

## Forest Service

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<https://www.fs.usda.gov/payette/>

# News Release

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## Public Scoping Period Open for the Rapid River Ecosystem Maintenance Burn Project - Closes September 16, 2019

**New Meadows, ID,** August 16, 2019 – The Payette National and Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests are seeking public comment on a prescribed burning project known as the Rapid River Ecosystem Maintenance Burn Project on the Payette and Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests in Idaho. The project area is located on both the New Meadows and Salmon River Ranger Districts. Interested parties should submit issues pertinent to this proposal in writing by September 16, 2019. Comments will help inform the environmental analysis and decision making process.

The purpose of the project is to restore wildlife habitat and improve ecosystem health in the Rapid River watershed and portions of Lost Creek, Boulder Creek, and Squaw Creek subwatersheds. While much of the project area has received prescribed burning treatments and/or experienced wildfire, there is a need for a more holistic, landscape scale approach to the existing conditions and desired conditions, including looking across National Forest boundary lines and private property.

Under the Wyden Authority, treatments on private property are possible and would be contingent upon approval from the private land owner and would also require entering into a formal agreement prior to implementation. Use of federal dollars on private property is made possible through the Wyden Authority.

The entire project area (including the Inventoried Roadless Area, and excluding the Pony Creek Research Natural Area) would be available to treatment over the next 25 years. Approximately 500 to 10,000 acres of fire would be applied annually. Prescribed burning operations would occur any time of year when conditions permit, typically in spring and fall.

A mosaic-like application of prescribed fire would re-introduce fire to approximately 75 percent of stands with historically high fire frequencies and lower severities, and 50 percent of stands with historically moderate to longer fire frequency and mixed to high severities.

Maintenance burning (burning after initial application of fire) would occur as necessary as often as every 5-15 years in fire regimes with historically frequent fire return intervals to maintain desired conditions. Approximately 500 to 10,000 acres of fire would be applied annually.

The New Meadows Ranger District and Salmon River Ranger District have made a preliminary assessment for  
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the project proposal and have determined that it falls within a category of action that are excluded from documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). This assessment found that no extraordinary circumstances exist that would preclude the use of a categorical exclusion.

#### How to Comment

To be most helpful, please make your comments as specific as possible. Comments may pertain to the nature and scope of the environmental, social, and economic issues, and possible modifications to the proposed action. Your comments will help us refine the proposal and identify preliminary issues, interested and affected persons, and possible alternatives. Comments received in response to this request will become part of the project record and will be available for public inspection on the "Public Comment/Objection Reading Room" on the project web site:

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=56471>.

Written, facsimile, hand-delivered, and electronic comments concerning this project will be accepted. Send written comments to Erin Phelps, New Meadows District Ranger, Payette National Forest, PO Box J, 3674 Highway 95, New Meadows, Idaho 83654. Comments may also be sent via facsimile to 208-347-0309. The office hours for those submitting hand-delivered comments are 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. Oral comments may also be provided at the New Meadows Ranger District Office during normal business hours via telephone 208- 347-0300 or in person. Comments may also be submitted through the RREMB Project web page at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=56471>. To submit comments using the web form select "Comment on Project" under "Get Connected" on the right panel of the project's web page.

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